

THE LEONARD LETTER

*A weekly electronic newsletter about
California government, business and taxes
Bill Leonard, Member
State Board of Equalization*

November 6, 2006

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom must, like men, undergo the fatigue of supporting it." --- Thomas Paine (1737-1809)

ON THE TRAIL

*****Vote on Tuesday*****

Do not forget to vote on Tuesday, November 7. If you would like more information about what is on your ballot, see the Secretary of State's Office Voter Information Guide: <http://www.voterguide.ss.ca.gov/>

If you have difficulty finding where your polling place is, you can look it up here: http://www.ss.ca.gov/elections/elections_ppl.htm

The Secretary of State's office also advises if you are using an electronic voting machine, be sure to finish voting. Many touch-screen machines present a summary of your ballot choices and ask you to finalize the selections. Review the paper trail to verify your vote. If you are having problems with the machine, ask a poll worker for help. If you don't want to use an electronic voting machine, you can request a paper ballot. For further assistance call the Election Protection Hotline at 1-866-687-8683

Some things I will be looking for on Tuesday are to what extent the declining number of land lines in homes, and other factors, is having on polling accuracy. The other is turnout. If one party gets voters to come out like this is a presidential election, and the other party turns out like a midterm -- then despite the polls, the former party is going to outperform the latter.

ISSUE FOCUS

*****Survey Shames Americas Elite Colleges*****

From the Leonard Blog

The Intercollegiate Studies Institute has a new study out that is a comprehensive survey of how well America's colleges are teaching basic civics. The results are a wake-up call. The University of Connecticut Department of Public Policy assisted with the survey to produce the results in "The Coming Crisis in Citizenship: Higher Education's Failure to Teach America's History and Institutions"

In the fall of 2005, UConn surveyed more than 14,000 randomly selected college freshmen and seniors at 50 colleges and universities across the country to measure their knowledge in American history, government, America and the world, and the market economy. ISI characterize the results as constituting nothing less than a coming crisis in American citizenship. I agree. Just a few of the findings:

"Seniors scored just 1.5 percent higher on average than freshmen...At many colleges, including Brown, Georgetown, and Yale, seniors know less than freshmen about America's history, government, foreign affairs, and economy. We characterize this phenomenon as "negative learning. "A majority of the 16 schools where senior scores were actually lower than freshman scores are considered to be among the most prestigious colleges in the United States."

Here is their sample quiz if you are like me and wondering if you can do better than today's college seniors (answers below). I found them to be depressingly easy. A specific date to the second question might have stumped me, but not the range.

- 1) Which of the following are the unalienable rights referred to in the Declaration of Independence?
 - A. life, liberty, and property.
 - B. honor, liberty, and peace.
 - C. liberty, health, and community.
 - D. life, respect, and equal protection.
 - E. life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
- 2) During which period was the American Constitution amended to guarantee women the right to vote?
 - A. 1850 – 1875
 - B. 1876 – 1900
 - C. 1901 – 1925
 - D. 1926 – 1950
 - E. 1951 – 1975
- 3) In his "I Have a Dream" speech, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.:
 - A. argued for the abolition of slavery.
 - B. advocated black separatism.
 - C. morally defended affirmative action.
 - D. expressed his hopes for racial justice and brotherhood.

E. proposed that several of America's founding ideas were discriminatory.

- 4) Which of the following was an alliance to resist Soviet expansion?
- A. United Nations.
 - B. League of Nations.
 - C. North Atlantic Treaty Organization.
 - D. Warsaw Pact.
 - E. Asian Tigers.
- 5) Which of the following is the best measure of production or output of an economy?
- A. Gross Domestic Product.
 - B. Consumer Price Index.
 - C. Unemployment Rate.
 - D. Prime Rate.
 - E. Exchange Rate.

Answers: 1E, 2C, 3D, 4C, 5A

Read the whole report and check out ISI's recommendations to turn this around:

<http://www.americancivilliteracy.org/report/summary.html>

MISCELLANY

One Letter at a Time

If you are looking for a special way to recognize Veterans' Day this year or to teach the young people in your life about the significance of military service, I recommend you go to:

<http://www.operationmilitarysupport.com/index2.html>

This grassroots group is working to recognize the men and women of our armed forces who do not receive regular mail from home. They send letters and care packages to the brave Americans serving overseas to make sure they know how much we stateside appreciate their sacrifice and service. I encourage you to join Operation Military Support and express your gratitude and respect to those who are serving right now.

A Good Read

On October 26, 1825, the Erie Canal was completed. It was one of the greatest engineering projects ever undertaken and it provided the crucial linkage between the Atlantic States and the western lands beyond the Appalachian Mountains. Peter L. Bernstein offers a sweeping work of history in his story of the conception, construction and completion of the Erie Canal in "Wedding of the Waters: The Erie Canal and the Making of a Great Nation." This stupendous project was a daunting challenge at every turn, for the financiers and politicians as well as the would-be engineers. The Erie Canal's crucial role in bringing about the industrial emergence of a young United States

is clearly shown. The technological ingenuity, global economics, financial skills, political intrigue, bold vision and backbreaking work all come to life in Mr. Bernstein's epic history.

*****IF BOE2 Were a State*****

Over the past several months I have devoted this space to profiling each of the 34 counties that comprise the Second BOE District that I represent. You have seen the diversity of California, from the Pacific Ocean to the High Sierra, the Central Valley to Lava Beds National Monument. The Second District is home to more than 9.5 million people and covers 87,338 square miles. That is more than 56% of California's land mass. If the Second District were a state, it would rank 12th in size compared to the other states in the nation, just ahead of Minnesota.

BOE AND LEGISLATIVE DATES

November 7, 2006 --- General election day.

November 11, 2006 – Veterans' Day.

November 15, 2006 --- Board of Equalization meets in Konocti Harbor with County Assessors.

November 20-21, 2006 -- Board of Equalization meets in Sacramento.

November 23, 2006 --- Thanksgiving Day.

December 4, 2006 --- The 2007-08 Regular Session of the Legislature convenes for an organizational session at 12 noon (Art. IV, Sec. 3(a)).

January 3, 2007--- Legislature reconvenes.

January 8, 2007 --- Swearing-in of new Constitutional officers.

January 10, 2007 --- Budget Bill must be submitted by Governor (Art. IV, Sec. 12 (a)).

NOTABLE DATES/ HISTORY

November 6, 1850 --- Yerba Buena and Angel Islands in the San Francisco Bay were reserved for military use.

November 6, 1860 ---Abraham Lincoln was elected the 16th president of the United States.

November 7, 1805 --- Lewis & Clark first sighted the Pacific Ocean.

November 8, 1942 --- British and U.S. forces invaded Axis-occupied North Africa.

November 8, 1950 --- An F-80C flown by Lt. Russell J. Brown with the 16th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron shot down a Russian-built MiG-15 over Korea in the world's first all-jet fighter air battle. See:

<http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=2292>

November 9, 1938 --- In Germany, Nazis set synagogues on fire, smashed the windows of Jewish shops, and arrested thousands of Jews in a single night that came to be known as *Kristallnacht*, or the Night of Broken Glass.

November 9, 1989 --- German citizens began to demolish the Berlin Wall, which had separated East Germany from West Germany since 1961.

November 10, 1919 --- The American Legion held its first national convention (Minneapolis).

November 11, 1620 --- Forty-one Pilgrims signed the Mayflower Compact, giving themselves the power to govern their planned settlement in New England.

November 11, 1921 --- Exactly three years after the end of World War I, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was dedicated at Arlington Cemetery in Virginia, during a ceremony presided over by President Warren G. Harding.

November 12, 1936 --- The Oakland Bay Bridge opened.

November 12, 1971 --- U.S. President Richard Nixon declared the end of the U.S. offensive role in the Vietnam War and withdrew 45,000 troops.

GENERAL TAX INFORMATION

For answers to your general tax questions, call the Board of Equalization information center. Customer service representatives are available to help you from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Pacific time, Monday through Friday (except state holidays).

Toll-free number: 800-400-7115
TDD service for the hearing impaired
TDD phones: 800-735-2929
Voice phones: 800-735-2922

To reach the Taxpayer Rights Advocate's office for assistance with any BOE issues, see <http://www.boe.ca.gov/tra/tra.htm>, or call toll-free 1-888-324-2798.

HOW TO CONTACT ME

Bill Leonard, Member
State Board of Equalization, Second District

Email: bill.leonard@boe.ca.gov

Northern California Office:

400 Capitol Mall, Suite 2340
Sacramento, CA 95814
Telephone: (916) 445-2181
Fax: (916) 327-4003

Southern California Office:

4295 E. Jurupa Ave., Ste. 204
Ontario, CA 91761-1428
Telephone: (909) 937-6106
Fax: (909) 937-7044